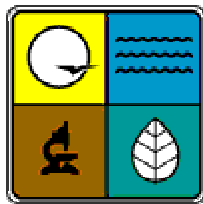


Suggestions for Improving Public Participation in Community Involvement Activities



**Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Division of Environmental Quality
Solid Waste Management Program**

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

This guidance manual is both a historic document and an expression of the Department of Natural Resources, Division of Environmental Quality's commitment to encourage public participation in the discussion, fact-finding and decision-making process that protects the public health and the Missouri environment.

For the first time, the developers of landfills in Missouri are required by law to provide basic information to the public early in the permitting process. Landfill developers are being asked to allow the public an opportunity to hear about plans, ask questions and express their opinions on landfill siting.

The Division and its Solid Waste Management Program strongly supported the legislation that brought public participation in landfill siting to this historic level. We gratefully recognize the assistance and support of stakeholders from the solid waste management industry and the citizen groups who provided input to both the crafting of the law and publishing of this manual.

As the title of this manual indicates, the measures outlined here are suggestions as to how the public can participate in the landfill siting process. We expect and welcome future innovations as the landfill industry and Missouri citizens learn to work together for the benefit of all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John A. Young". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

John A. Young, Director
Division of Environmental Quality

LETTER FROM THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR

After months of planning by Missouri DNR staff, several meetings including stakeholders from the solid waste management industry and citizens involved in landfill siting issues, the Missouri Legislature established RSMo 260.205 in 1999 to allow improved public participation in landfill siting. This manual offers suggestions as to how the intent of this new law might be met.

This manual is a living document since changes in regulations and accepted practices in the solid waste industry may change from time to time. These suggestions carry the mantle of flexibility to meet future changes, but at the same time, provide a structure to allow citizen input on landfill siting early in the permitting process and more often than had previously been possible.

I wish to thank everyone involved in the creation of this manual and once more assure the users of this document that further assistance in encouraging this level of public participation is available from the staff of the Solid Waste Management Program and Technical Assistance Program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Hull", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Jim Hull, Director
Solid Waste Management Program

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Proper solid waste management is of critical importance to community, business and regulatory interests. Protecting public health and safety as well as maintaining and improving environmental quality are only some of the benefits derived from serious, long-range planning for solid waste reduction, reuse, recycling or disposal. The constructive involvement of a diverse representation of community members as well as, industry and regulatory personnel in the landfill siting and permitting process is the goal of this guidance document.

Introduction and Background

Few would disagree that landfills are necessary in the scheme of integrated solid waste management. Even where incineration has been a means of reducing the volume of solid wastes, the landfill still plays a role in the disposal of ash, metals, glass and other materials that won't burn or might affect the public health or the environment if they were burned.

Like other developments that have emerged to meet the needs of a growing human population and shrinking land availability, landfill siting has become controversial. It was not too many years ago when local open dumps, often located in wetlands, along streams or on lakeshores, leaked contaminated water and fouled the air with odors and smoke. We can't return to those unregulated days, but the images remain in the public's memory and can hinder the establishment of modern, scientifically monitored landfills.

How we got here

With the establishment of Federal Subtitle D standards for landfill design and construction in the early 1990s, state and federal solid waste regulators became more serious about protecting communities from leachate, methane gas, odor, wind-borne dust and blowing trash sometimes associated with the disposal of solid waste.

Today, under the umbrella of state and federal guidelines, the solid waste management industry takes advantage of new liners for landfills and more efficient equipment and methods of operation. Unfortunately, much of the public is unaware of the technological advances and often hear only the negative side of landfill siting and operation.

Over the same 10-year time frame, local government officials, community organizations and individuals have become more aware of their right to be heard on issues that affect their quality of life. Access to better education and information sources such as local libraries, television, print media and now the Internet have given concerned citizens better tools to use as they evaluate the pros and cons of landfill siting proposals in their own neighborhoods.

Get together

Somewhere in the mix of corporate intentions, regulatory investigations, neighborhood studies and the eventual permit approvals or denials there must be a middle ground. This is where the best thinking occurs and the inspired results emerge. This is where history is made and heartfelt congratulations are exchanged over a job well done. This is where public participation policies really work.

Much is being said and written on what public participation is and how it can be improved. Government staff have the responsibility of presenting state and federal regulatory policies to communities. How well the messages are delivered or received prompts more effective involvement of individuals and groups within a community.

With effective communication, it is possible to understand an elderly person's disappointment when he isn't told about development plans that will clear the woodlot next to his home. Concern

can be heard in the voices of parents who fear a proposed waste disposal site may affect local drinking water supplies or the air quality in their own backyards. Without adequate information for decision-making, we all struggle to find answers now to questions that only time can fully answer.

Living regulation

In 1976 the federal government enacted the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act - widely known as “RCRA” - to address the huge and growing, nationwide problem of municipal and industrial waste management and disposal. Itself an amendment to the federal Solid Waste Disposal Act, RCRA has been amended several times over the years as Congress responds to changing national needs. Some state governments have formed partnerships with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to handcraft state-level regulations and policies that support the goals of RCRA. The goals are:

- to protect human health and the environment;
- to reduce waste and conserve energy and natural resources; and
- to reduce or eliminate the generation of hazardous waste as quickly as possible.

Communicating is good business

To best attain these broad-based goals, people work at improving communication and building partnerships. Partnerships among people involved in and affected by landfill siting proposals often have the best chance of mutual benefit. Honest, open communication is a first step toward building partnerships.

A company using sound business practices and common sense may realize the benefits of open communication with members of the affected community. Successful public participation can show up on the corporate bottom line as profitable in the operation of a new landfill site. Owners and operators who, through regular meetings that involve neighbors near their landfills, have realized an easing of tensions and have found partners rather than plaintiffs.

In the same spirit of open communication, citizen activist groups are cautioned against the use of misinformation to gain public support through fear and suspicion.

Take time to talk

Even long-time members of a community can be unaware of all the characteristics of their hometown. All participants in the landfill siting process need to understand the expectations and concerns of each element in the siting and permitting process. Just having a meeting doesn’t mean everyone will be heard or understood. Desmond M. Conner, a veteran observer of public participation dynamics, has said that public meetings often become “traditional confrontations generating more heat than light.”

What is happening?

Decisionmakers need to visit communities affected by their decisions. They need to take time to meet with community leaders, elected officials and anyone with an opinion on development plans. Missouri law now requires a “Public Awareness” session that provides an opportunity for Department of Natural Resources’ (DNR) landfill regulators to explain landfill policies and the permitting process. This meeting will be early enough in the process to give the community plenty of time to react to what they learn.

Landfill developers may also participate in this early meeting although the new public participation law provides them with a “Community Involvement” session later in the process. In this session, the community may ask questions and can expect an answer from the landfill developers and their consultants within a defined time frame. DNR staff will likely be on hand to answer regulatory-related questions.

In today’s economy, a landfill development and its operation is a multi-million dollar proposal. It is definitely worth the developers time to get to know the neighbors. Hiring a professional service to design a meeting or find individuals who will study the key characteristics of a community is one way of learning about the community. Such a community assessment may also be obtained informally with the help of local residents or staff people who live in the area.

Introduce the landfill

Distributing a publication such as a fact sheet or pamphlet is one way to introduce a proposed landfill, but perhaps more effective is a full-page presentation in a local newspaper. Here the major players can be introduced, the concept outlined, the reasons for the landfill explained and then the community can be offered a clip-out response form that will allow them to give their own opinions about the project. Two-way communication is often more effective than an informative lecture.

In planning a meeting, traditional seating, traditional evening scheduling and traditional confrontations may be avoided by using an open house concept. Where Missouri law requires a defined public hearing, an open house may precede the formal session. As a result, the formal hearing may be shorter and less confrontational. The public awareness session or community involvement session would be considered less formal methods of obtaining public participation.

When a community seems sharply divided on an issue, such as a landfill siting, it may be effective to bring those strong feelings to a “planning workshop.” Such activity will usually encourage the building of partnerships while the issues are being addressed. At this stage, an impartial facilitator may play a key role in the development of constructive communication. Participants can represent all concerned parties, but the focus is on local interests. Developers and regulators participate as resource people.

Making progress

Public participation has evolved as planners, developers and the regulatory agencies have tried to avoid the expense and hard feelings that often arise in confrontational relationships. For a long time it was considered good policy to make the decision and then tell the local community what was decided and what would happen if the decision was contested (called the Decide - Announce - Defend strategy by Conner.) Later the process became “reaching a consensus” where all parties didn’t have to agree on the merits of a decision, but again were expected to accept the results.

Hans and Annmarie Bleiker, who have devoted their lives to teaching and learning about community planning, believe the consensus process leads to misunderstandings in a democratic society. Community participants may be left to feel they must reach a consensus “or else.” As a result, the minority opinion is always outvoted even when no vote has actually been taken. The Bleikers favor “informed consent” which they define as: “The grudging willingness of opponents to ‘go along’ with a course of action to which they actually are opposed.” The Systematic Development of Informed Consent (SDIC) is what the Bleikers believe results in effective implementation of solutions to serious problems affecting society.

Citizen input is important

At present, local residents are being asked to take a more active role in the decision-making process and are being given the opportunity to affect the ultimate decision by contributing local insights and suggestions. Frustration results when all parties involved are not as open as they can be or as informed as possible regarding details of the process. The community may see their role as protecting the home turf. The landfill developers may see their role as providing a service for the general public. The regulators may see the process as a means of getting a job done in accordance with the law. Motivations may differ, but the development of informed consent may solve the problem.

The Bleikers stress that the relatively new citizen participation process is complex and needs to be planned and carried out carefully. “Generally there exist good reasons for a public agency being involved in citizen participation (CP). But, unfortunately, most of them do not manage their CP efforts with the same care that they give to managing their technical efforts. As a result, much of the CP work by public agencies, though it is well intended, does more harm than good,” they have said.

Missouri’s Public Participation Law

Briefly we will outline the requirements of Missouri’s new public participation law, now part of 260.205 RSMo, and suggest some ways the benefits of the law might be attained. Through several years of discussion, meetings with stakeholders, legislative studies and formal hearings; it has been determined that a permit process that was saddled with litigation, suspicion and duplication of investigations was not working. The benefits of following the new law will likely include saving state, corporate and community time and money; building partnerships rather than maintaining a legacy of anger and distrust; and making real progress toward meeting everyone’s solid waste management goals.

Missouri law now requires the following:

- All preliminary site investigation requests received by the DNR after August 28, 1999 will be subject to a public involvement activity as part of the permit application process - 260.205. 3 RSMo.
- The applicant will notify the public of the approval of the preliminary site investigation within 30 days of obtaining the approval - 260.205. 3. (1) RSMo.
- Public notification will be by certified mail to the county or city government in which the proposed disposal area (landfill) is to be located and by certified mail to the solid waste management district where the proposed solid waste disposal area is to be located - 260.205. 3. (1).
- Within 90 days after the preliminary site investigation approval, the Missouri Department of Natural Resources will hold a **public awareness** session in the county where the proposed disposal area is to be located - 260.205. 3. (2).
- The DNR will notify the public at least 30 days before the meeting by both print and broadcast media serving the area where the disposal site is to be located. (Specific public notice requirements are detailed in the law.) The **public awareness** session is intended to provide general information to interested citizens on the design and operation of solid waste disposal areas - 260.205. 3. (2) RSMo. (In addition, information on other DNR services,

disposal alternatives and other current solid waste management issues may be made available.)

- At least 60 days before the DNR receives a report on the results of a detailed site investigation, the permit applicant will hold a **community involvement** session in the county where the proposed disposal site is to be located - 260.205. 3. (3) RSMo. DNR staff will be available at this session as well to answer immediate questions from the public.
- At least 30 days before a **community involvement** session, the permit applicant will provide public notice in print and broadcast media serving the county where the proposed disposal site is to be located - 260.205. 3. (3) RSMo. (Specific notice requirements are detailed in the law.)
- Public notices will include the addresses of the applicant, DNR and information on the public comment period. The public comment period will begin on the day of the **community involvement** session and continue for at least 30 days after the session - 260.205. 3. (3) RSMo.
- The applicant will respond to all persons submitting comments during the public comment period no more than 30 days after they are received - 260.205. 3 (3) RSMo.
- If a proposed solid waste disposal area is to be located in a county or city that has local planning and zoning requirements, the applicant will not be required to hold a **community involvement** session, but the following conditions must be met - 260.205. 3. (4):
 1. The local planning and zoning requires a public meeting on the siting issue;
 2. The applicant notifies the DNR at least 30 days prior to such a meeting that this will be used in lieu of a community involvement meeting;
 3. The planning and zoning meeting provides public notice by print and broadcast media serving the area of the proposed disposal site at least 30 days before such a meeting;
 4. The planning and zoning meeting is held at least 30 days prior to the submission to the DNR of a report on the results of a detailed site investigation;
 5. The applicant submits a record of this meeting to the DNR;
 6. A public comment period begins on the day of the meeting and continues for at least 14 days after the meeting;
 7. The applicant responds to all persons submitting comments during the public comment period no more than 14 days after the comments are received.
- After an application for a (landfill) construction permit meets all statutory and regulatory requirements of issuance,

a **public hearing** on the draft permit will be held by the DNR in the county where the proposed solid waste disposal area is to be located.
- The DNR will notify the public with notices in both print and broadcast media serving the area affected by the proposed landfill development at least 30 days prior to the hearing.

Public hearing still in process

Usually the final public participation effort involved in the landfill permitting process is known as the **public hearing**. Prior to the passage of the current Missouri public participation legislation, the **public hearing** was held late in the overall process - after the completion of field investigations and design work. Under the new law, the **public hearing** is now held on the draft permit.

The more formal **public hearing** is held before a hearing examiner. The public is not given the opportunity to ask questions about the proposed site or details of the permit. Only statements are allowed and are usually recorded as an official documentation of the meeting.

As public participation has evolved, the **public hearing** is now more often than not preceded by an open house or availability session where both regulators and permit applicants are available to answer questions and explain details of the site and permitting process.

What next?

Many readers of this guide may have attended or participated in a public hearing, public meeting, town meeting, convention session, workshop or brainstorming session. Through years of experience, presenters have learned what methods of meeting the public are productive and which are at best, a waste of time and manpower for both the department, the regulated industry and the public.

On the other hand, crafting a meeting to the needs of the public will mean getting down to the details. Often this requires innovation. There are few, if any, guaranteed templates for public participation. What works in one instance may be a disaster in the next. What we can provide here, are suggestions.

In the current climate, Missouri law requires the above outlined public participation meetings in addition to a public hearing held on the draft permit. Early in the planning process, it must be decided what type of meeting is necessary to efficiently meet the intent of the law. Indications that a certain style of meeting is better than another can be based on the experience of the agency or business involved or may result from a careful assessment of community needs. If community members indicate they are concerned about a lack of information or rumors begin showing up in local media, facts may be needed and a carefully planned meeting may be necessary to provide this information.

As mentioned before, the traditional town hall - type meeting has certain flaws when compared to more informal meeting formats. The separation of speakers or officials from the audience by use of a stage or table in front has been found to leave the audience with the impression that they are assumed to be uninformed or considered inferior. Less formal dress among agency and business representatives is also suggested to ease potential separation tensions.

Build a public participation tool kit

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency provides several publications that suggest various forms of public meeting and public participation formats. (See page 32.)

The first step in arranging for public participation is to determine the level of public interest in the proposed landfill siting. This can be accomplished by reviewing regulatory agency files on the applicant and similar facilities, talking to people who have experience working with members of the affected community or conducting personal or phone interviews with community leaders or others who have expressed an interest in the project.

It is very strongly suggested that before a formal meeting is arranged, efforts be made to become familiar with the community's history, present conditions and expectations for the future. In most cases this means talking to people. To prepare for a **community assessment**, it is suggested that more than a few people be interviewed to provide the greatest possible perspective of community reactions. Determine how many interviews to conduct, depending on interest in the project, staff time and your budget. Use existing sources such as newspaper files, letters and documents. Determine if there are any language, geographic, economic or cultural issues that might be raised during the interview process.

- Assure interviewees that their comments will remain confidential.
- Ask for names and phone numbers of other possible contacts.
- Find out what the person thinks of past public participation efforts by the department or permit applicant.
- Identify specific citizen concerns about the site - health issues, economic concerns, agency or applicant credibility, what interest groups are involved, what the local media reaction has been and how many families or businesses may feel affected by the siting.
- Keep all participants copied on letters and meeting reports during the community assessment process.

Since the process of landfill siting may last for several years, it is suggested that a mailing list be developed early and maintained to involve new residents and changes in community and local government leadership.

Preparing a **public notice** is a key element in the public participation process. The EPA recommends selecting print or electronic media with the largest readership or audience in the affected area. Coordinate publication and meeting dates so weekly publications get the notice in time to be useful. The actual notice should contain the following:

- Name and address of the facility owner/operator.
- A brief description of the site location and business to be conducted at the facility.
- Name, address and phone number of a person who can be contacted for further information.
- A brief description of the comment procedures and the date, time and place of any meeting.
- Any special considerations such as establishing an information center (in a local library or government building) or a public site tour schedule.

The EPA suggests: "**Public notices** are an efficient, simple means of alerting the public to important events. However, **public notices** should never substitute for other activities that involve direct communication with the public."

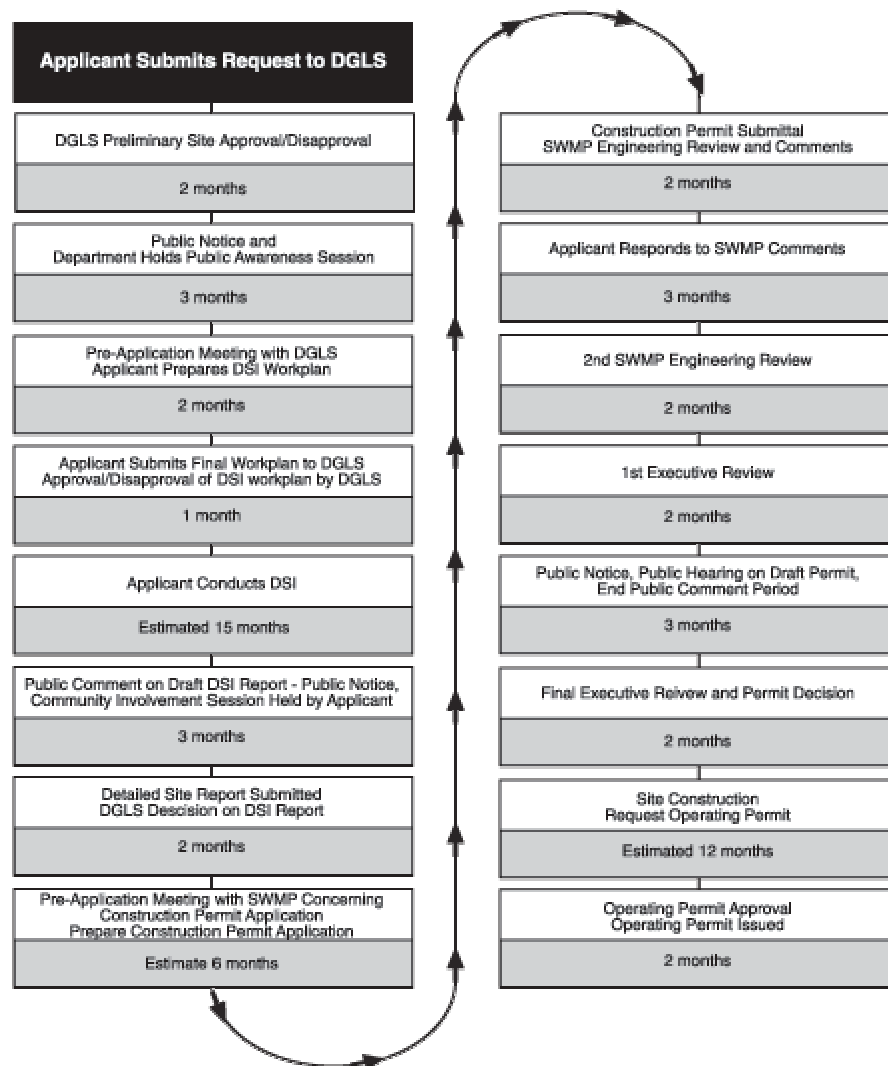
Fact sheets are an important tool to be used in mailings, for community assessments or at meetings. It is suggested that they be considered for use as a written statement or to provide "bullet" facts. The EPA notes, "These documents allow the agency/applicant to communicate a consistent message to the public and the media. Produced throughout the permitting process, they serve to educate the public about the process and technical issues and can aid in creating a general community understanding of the project."

“They can be produced relatively inexpensively and distributed easily and directly by mail. **Fact sheets** can be tailored to meet specific information needs identified during the community assessment.

“However, a poorly written **fact sheet** can be misleading or confusing. Documents of this type that are not written in an objective style can be perceived as being too ‘persuasive’ and considered ‘propaganda’ by mistrusting communities. **Fact sheets** are also a one-way communication tool so it is suggested that they always provide a name and telephone number of a contact person to encourage public reaction, comments and questions,” the EPA has said.

What type of meeting?

As noted earlier, the traditional public meeting or town hall - type meeting may encourage a confrontational environment and presents a formal appearance that may discourage communication. However, the traditionally defined public meeting may also suggest stability and attention to community expectations in some cases. This type of meeting may be correct in some cases. It is important to know that there are alternatives.



Based on 60 months timeframe
 DSI – Detailed Site Investigation
 DGLS – Division of Geology and Land Survey
 SWMP – Solid Waste Management Program

Number of Months to
complete each process

The first alternative suggested is the **informal meeting**. This type of meeting can take two to three days to plan and conduct - three hours for scheduling and set up, five hours for preparation, four hours to conduct the meeting and four hours to follow up on issues raised during the meeting.

To conduct an **informal meeting**, the EPA suggests:

- Involve each citizen group and local agency that is directly affected by the facility or contact individuals who have expressed concerns about the siting process.
- Use invitations to manage the size of the meeting. Several small meetings may be more effective than one meeting that becomes too large for everyone to be heard.
- Select a meeting date, time and place convenient to those who will attend. Pay attention to potential local meeting conflicts, handicapped needs and providing an informal setting where the exchange of ideas is encouraged.
- Begin the meeting with a brief overview. Outline the permit review schedule (see the appendix) and explain how the public can remain involved. Briefly cover what topics the public may wish to discuss and report what needs to be known.
- Identify the applicant representatives or DNR staff who will be the decision-makers. This allows people to express their suggestions and opinions directly to the decision-makers.
- Avoid becoming too technical. Don't rely on trade jargon or assume people will know what you mean when using terms familiar to you. Suggest additional or separate meetings for those with technical concerns.
- Listen and take notes at each **informal meeting** to find out what citizens want done. Some concerns may be addressed by making minor adjustments in the permit proposal. This also allows the explanation that some requests can't be met due to legal or planning conflicts.
- Keep minutes for an ongoing file.

Considering the advantages or limitations of the **informal meeting**, the EPA says, "The primary benefit of **informal meetings** is that they allow two-way interaction between citizens, local officials and the hosts. Citizens will be informed about developments and officials responsible for the site can learn how citizens view the proposal.

"Informal meetings add a personal dimension to what might otherwise be treated as a purely technical problem. **Informal meetings** offer both citizens and officials a chance to increase their familiarity with how the process works, increase awareness of each other's point of view and actively promote public participation. **Informal meetings** also may diffuse any tension between the community and the agency (DNR or permit applicant).

"Some opposition groups may perceive efforts to restrict the number of persons attending as a 'divide and conquer' tactic designed to limit the influence of large groups or exclude certain individuals or groups from participation. To prevent this, provide the opportunity for additional **informal meetings** with those who express a concern about being left out.

"Irate groups or individuals may accuse staff of telling different stories to different people at these small meetings. Avoid this by inviting a cross-section of interest groups to each small meeting or wind up the series with a large public meeting. Staff can also keep detailed notes of the meeting proceedings and make these available to the public."

A **Citizen Advisory Panel (CAP)** is a style of informal meeting that has emerged for public participation during regulatory negotiation and the permitting process, especially during lengthy Superfund clean up of hazardous waste sites. CAPs (also called Citizen Advisory Groups) are designed to provide community leaders with regular access to the process. Either the permit applicant or the department may organize a CAP. Suggested CAP members are representatives of local government, business and civic organizations, environmental action groups and staff from a variety of government agencies or departments that have a stake in the process.

The CAP can be used to gauge community reactions and monitor developments early in the planning process. Later, the CAP can direct specific concerns to study groups or technical panels. They can become an ongoing oversight group that works with both the permit applicant and the department to reflect community concerns regarding a landfill site. It is suggested that if a CAP is used, that it be organized early and meets regularly. How often the meetings occur is likely to depend on the stage of a project's development.

Another popular meeting type is the **availability session/open house**. This format allows presenters to erect displays, posters or slide shows to illustrate their message. In turn, it allows the public to meet one-on-one with the agency or business representatives best prepared to answer their specific questions. Refreshments are suggested to further enhance the informal atmosphere.

Late afternoon and early evening hours are suggested for the **availability session** because this allows the public to come in for information at their convenience. There should be plenty of advance notice and planning to make sure the session meets public expectations. It is suggested that one presenter or contact person be available for each 15 to 20 people expected at the session.

A rehearsal of potential questions is suggested so presenting participants are comfortable with their material and ready for meeting the public. Signup at the door can create a list that allows later contact between the presenters and public. Fact sheets can give people something to refer to before they form their questions and to have for later reference.

The advantages and limitations of the **availability session** as outlined by the EPA are as follows: "The one-to-one conversations during an **availability session/open house** can help build trust and establish a rapport between citizens and agency staff. An informal, neutral setting will keep officials and the public relaxed and make communications smoother.

"Planning and conducting an **availability session/open house** can require a significant amount of staff time. A low turnout may not justify the effort. Hence, community interest in the site should be significant before an **availability session/open house** is planned."

If public interest is considerable and the community is willing, a **workshop** may be effective. The **workshop**, or seminar, is a gathering of 10 to 30 people who are guided by a small group of specialists or technicians that can address specific concerns. Presenters can come from the hosting agency or business or they may be invited or paid to participate.

When planning **workshops** and other meetings, consider ample advance notice and avoid any conflicts with local activities and sports events. Media advertising or public service announcements, door-to-door flyers, posters, mailing invitations and registration forms can provide notice. It is important to limit the number of participants in a **workshop** to maintain its effectiveness.

Workshops can be conducted before formal public hearings or during public comment periods to assist citizens in developing and presenting testimony. Fact sheets and exhibits can also be used at **workshops**.

These are advantages and limitations of the workshop according to the EPA: “**Workshops** provide more information to the public than is possible through fact sheets or other written materials. **Workshops** have proven successful in familiarizing citizens with key technical terms and concepts before a formal public meeting. **Workshops** also allow two-way communication, making them particularly good for reaching opinion leaders, interest group leaders, and the affected public.

“If only a limited number are held, **workshops** can reach only a small segment of the affected population.

“When planning a **workshop**, the agency staff should make sure that it is announced well in advance in local newspapers, to help ensure that it will be well-attended. In addition, it may be helpful to specifically invite all residents who have expressed an interest in the site.”

In addition to the various types of meetings to encourage public participation, it is important to keep in mind the communication between the local government officials, federal agencies, legal teams and others involved in the business of landfill siting. For this purpose, briefings and presentations can be developed to make sure everyone is still moving towards the same goal as the landfill permit process moves along.

The process of public participation may be a new experience for citizens affected by landfill siting. It may be necessary to provide a more level playing field for the various individuals and citizen groups that may feel uneasy about entering the dialogue over the lengthy permit process.

How does the public get involved?

A citizen member of one of Missouri’s pro-environment action groups has offered the following suggestions:

- Citizens interested in following the process may be wise to form a citizen’s group. The group can be loosely organized or be incorporated with the Missouri Secretary of State’s Office. This provides an identity for the group by establishing a process for electing officers, setting meetings, voting on by-laws, filling out state forms and paying a fee. The group would establish a P.O. Box with its official name and create a checking account in their own name.
- Interested citizens should become familiar with local elected officials, including addresses and phone numbers, and provide this information to other members of the community.
- Involve the community by publishing newspaper articles, printing flyers, setting up meetings, placing bulletin boards at local businesses, putting up yard signs and providing announcements to local church groups, schools or clubs. Officials of local organizations, such as subdivision presidents or block leaders, should be involved to help spread the word about siting activities.
- Learn about your local geological, hydrological and soil characteristics. The Division of Geology and Land Survey (DGLS), in Rolla, has topographical and geological maps. The U.S. Geological Survey, in Rolla, has hydrological maps. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers may have done studies of the above characteristics in the area affected by landfill plans. Soil information may be obtained from county extension agents or the Missouri Department of

Agriculture. Local water districts can provide information on past, present and future conditions in the groundwater.

- Find out about the designs of landfills, closure procedures, post-closure requirements and financial assurance requirements for solid waste facilities. Find out what geo/hydrological conditions the state considers unsuitable or suitable for the construction of a landfill.
- Learn the exact location and size of the proposed landfill site. A copy of the permit application may be available through DNR's Solid Waste Management Program (SWMP) or may be placed in a local library during the permit process.
- Find out who the owner of the proposed site is or will be. Obtain information on investors and officers of any corporation related to the siting issue. Information on these can be obtained from the county assessor's office or the Secretary of State's Office. Find out if the applicant has a record of noncompliance with environmental regulations.
- Obtain the state statutes on solid waste facilities from the Secretary of State's Office or from DNR's Solid Waste Management Program.
- Obtain guidance manuals on solid waste from DGLS or the Solid Waste Management Program. The DGLS manual is called Appendix 1. Understand the denial section - DGLS denies applications on three different levels.
- Understand local compliance and local permitting rules. Check local planning and zoning, county solid waste or city solid waste ordinances.
- Obtain a division chart for DNR/DGLS and DNR/SWMP staff who will be directly involved in the permitting process. List their addresses, phone numbers, Fax numbers, e-mail addresses and Web sites so communication is improved.
- Prepare for public meetings and maintain contacts after the meeting. Keep in mind that the DNR's purpose is to protect the public health and safety.
- Ask to review both DGLS and SWMP files on the application on a regular basis. Each requires at least three days notice before they may make files available to the public.
- Citizens with information on local geological, hydrological and soil conditions such as caves, sinkholes, underground streams, etc., should document this information and send it to the DNR.
- If the group plans to develop its own data, a registered hydrologist/geologist and environmental lawyer should be hired for this work.
- Get involved in recycling programs and work with your community to reuse or reduce waste generation. Learn about alternatives to landfills, such as recycling, composting or new technology.

This activist contributor said, "A common question citizens raise is, 'When do I vote on this issue?' You have to let them know you do not vote on whether you want a landfill in your community."

It is the unexpected questions that remind us of how careful our planning and preparations must be. An off hand remark or an ignored phone call can easily scrap a public participation plan.

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US Environmental Protection Agency, EPA 530-SW-90-019
Sites for our Solid Waste - A Guidebook for Effective Public Involvement, March, 1990.

US Environmental Protection Agency, EPA 500-R-00-007
Public Involvement in Environmental Permits: A Reference Guide, August, 2000.

To obtain these documents:

Most EPA publications can be ordered by phone by calling 1-800-490-9198 or by writing to:
RCRA Information Center (RIC)
US Environmental Protection Agency
Office of Solid Waste Management
401 M Street SW
Washington DC 20460

Or:

The National Service Center for Environmental Publications
P.O. Box 42419
Cincinnati, OH 45242-2419

Publications are often available for computer downloading in full or in part. For example, the latest version of the RCRA Public Involvement Manual is available at
www.epa.gov/epaoswer/hazwaste/permit/pubpart/

Public Meeting Checklist

Has the "law" been checked to see if a public meeting is needed?

Do "we" think so?

Does "the community" think so?(Consider conducting a needs assessment.)

What is the purpose of the meeting?

Inform the public.

Listen to community concerns.

Other _____

What is the most appropriate format?

Town hall-type public meeting.

Public availability session.

Begin a Community Assistance panel (CAP).

Combine efforts with an EPA Community Advisory group (CAG).

Present as special feature at another scheduled meeting (PTA, Neighborhood Association, Civic Club, etc.)

Other _____

Who is the target audience?

Geographic area.

Entire town/community.

Sensitive sub-population _____

Activist group.

Elected/government officials.

Other _____

How should the target audience be notified?

Newspaper notice.

Door-to-door flyers.

Church bulletin.

Personal calls.

EPA/other agency mailing list.

Other _____

Should the media be invited?

Yes.

No.

Is the preparation different if the media are expected to attend?

Yes. How _____

No.

Which agencies and organizations should be invited to present and/or answer questions?

State health department.

Federal health (ATSDR, CDC, etc.)

State environmental agency.

US EPA.

Local health department.

Other _____

Where should it be held? (Consider how the room can be set up).

Public building (school, library, etc.)

Private home

Church

Other _____

Do state agencies have resources that may be useful?

Personnel such as health assessor, statistician, physician, epidemiologist, community educator, risk communicator, moderator/facilitator, regional representative (their US EPA contacts), writer/editor, veterinarian, psychologist, economist.

Services such as public health consultations, exposure investigation, community and health care provider education, geographic information services.

Materials such as toxicological profiles, physician case studies, public health statements, fact sheets, community needs assessment tool.

Should we hold a pre-meeting for the presenters? (If so, all of the issues listed below could be addressed.)

Conference call.

Dinner or other meeting at the site.

What is/are the take-home message(s)? (Limit to the three most important).

Do the presenters agree upon the intended take-home messages?

Yes.

No.

Create a meeting agenda.

Does the community participate?

Does the community confirm?

Carefully consider how long the meeting should/may last.

Build in flexibility.

Define the roles of each presenter; assign the following tasks.

Facilitator/moderator.

Speakers for each topic.

Note taker.

Person(s) to answer “difficult” questions.

Other _____

Discuss how to keep the meeting on track.

Establish ground rules. (appoint facilitator or someone else to explain the format/ground rules at the meeting).

Consider using flip chart, index cards, etc. for questions.

Time limits for audience questions and/or presenters?

Anticipate community questions.

Discuss potential questions with all presenters.

Research appropriate answers

Assign presenters to answer certain types of questions
(consider individual strengths and trigger points).

Other _____

Prepare materials.

Sign-in sheets.

Contact names.

Copies of slides/overheads.

Fact sheets.

Evaluation form.

Other _____

Decide what to evaluate.

Did people understand the “take-home messages?”

Did people feel that their concerns were heard and addressed?

Did people have questions that were not addressed?

Will people change attitudes based on the health/risk
information they received?

Other _____

Select most appropriate method(s) of evaluation.

Follow-up phone calls.

Written survey at end of meeting.

Mailed survey.

Focus group before and/or after meeting.

Consider soliciting future participation from meeting attendees (for distributing flyers, notifying neighbors of meetings, participating in phone tree, reporting community concerns, holding meetings in their homes, social groups, schools, etc.).

Add section to evaluation.

Ask on sign-in sheet.

Follow-up. (What, if any, actions can the community expect from the agencies after the public meeting?)

Follow-up letter.

Meeting summary.

Personal calls/letters re: individual questions.

Additional meetings.

Site activities.

Plan to state expected time frame for any intended follow-up.

Post-meeting: After the meeting, take time to talk to key participants or presenters to discuss what went well and what did not. Plan corrective actions.

Review the evaluation results!

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